

ORAL HISTORY OF THE
TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY
INTERVIEWS WITH
LLOYD HUNTINGTON

BY CHARLES W. CRAWFORD
TRANSCRIBER - BARBARA WASSER
ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE
MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY



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DECEMBER 20, 1972

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PLACE Sanibel, Florida

DATE December 20, 1972

Lloyd F. Huntington
(Interviewee) Lloyd Huntington

Charles W. Crawford
(For the Mississippi Valley Archives
of the John Willard Brister Library
of Memphis State University)

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THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS AN ORAL HISTORY OF TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY. THE DATE IS DECEMBER 20, 1972. THE PLACE IS SANIBEL ISLAND, FLORIDA. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. LLOYD HUNTINGTON. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BARBARA WASSER. INTERVIEW # 1.

DR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Huntington, I suggest that we first start by getting some biographical background about you. I think we should have some sort of biographical sketch up to the time you became associated with TVA, in January of 1935, I believe.

MR. HUNTINGTON: Well, I began life out in Minnesota, but left there soon thereafter and came to Illinois and spent my youth in Illinois. Graduated from Pontiac High School in Pontiac, Illinois, went to the University of Illinois School of Architecture, graduated with a degree in Architectural Engineering. I've never practiced it and I've hardly been in an architect's office since then. I stayed on two or three years after that with the student YMCA and took some graduate courses during that period, then moved to Detroit, Michigan as a student YMCA secretary on the Detroit YMCA staff out at what was then called City College. It has since become Wayne University. And while there I tried to develop some programs that would be meaningful to



tried to develop some programs that would be meaningful to the students. I had a cabinet of about a dozen fellows with whom we did the planning. Anything that could be done to stir their imaginations--the student imagination--we did. Eventually, I found myself doing the field work, directing the field work for the sociology and economic professors on Saturday. They would come along. We would get 40 or 50 students and we'd go around and visit the institutions in the city of Detroit and talk to the heads of the institutions. And then we would sometimes have forums on a Wednesday night, bring in outside speakers, and discussions after the speakers finished. In other words, we carried more an informal program to acquaint students with some aspects of living that they didn't get in the classroom. And oddly enough it was the instructors in City College that were most friendly to all of this program.

Well, I stayed there for five years, I believe, then decided that if I were to remain in the YMCA, I should find out what contribution religion had to play in the program. Because what I was doing was really trying to help students get acquainted with the institutions that existed and their problems. And if I were to be with an institution, a Christian organization, I ought to find out what contribution religion could make to this program.

So I pulled up stakes at 500 bucks, my last paychecks, and went to New Haven and got a part-time job there in the YMCA in boys' work. Mrs. Huntington got a job teaching, and

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I started in the Divinity School. I spent two years there and decided that I should move over to the Graduate School of Education, because the thing that interested me was a pragmatic approach in education, and they had it over there in the school of education. It was the John Dewey School. And so I spent some time there. They were conducting an experiment, a novel kind of graduate school, where you went into a general seminar, then into smaller seminars. I spent a couple of years there, and I finished all my work except my dissertation. But I did a lot of work outside of necessity to make ends meet, and in addition I got involved into all kinds of activities.

Since I was in the boys' work department of YMCA, my job was to find leaders of neighborhood gangs. Some were undergraduates of Yale College or graduate student, and they got minor allowance of \$100 a year perhaps, for this work. I'd found the clubs or gangs of boys and spotted the leader in each one of them, and then they did what they wanted to do. The leaders were encouraged to visit the boys in their home and all that kind of thing, and they used the "Y" facilities, incidentally for a physical program, swimming and that kind of thing.

This got me in touch with a good many of the graduate students and undergraduate students that I would never have heard about otherwise. [We] got them to take an interest in the boys and see what they could do with them. They got into all their problems and a good many gangs were involved in



petty larceny and stuff like that. So these graduate students, Yale University boys, got some of them deeply involved with these kids. Well, these are the kinds of experiences you just try to cultivate among the leaders.

Then on the side I worked for Jerome Davis. I don't know whether you know him or not, but he was sort of a sociologist on the divinity school staff at the time. He was interested in prison/reform work. So I said, sure, on Monday night I'd go down to the local jail and see what could be done. I did not want to do any preaching. That kind of stuff, they could find someone else, if you want to have a Sunday service for them. But I was interested in some discussion groups, so I went down every Monday night. [I'd] get thirty or forty of these guys at one end of the cellblock and try to engage them in discussions. Well, that's a sort of challenge, you know. They didn't have to come if they didn't want to; they didn't have to remain if they didn't want to. Interest alone held them there. I had to cook up subjects which would be of interest to them, otherwise I might as well stay home on Monday night. So I'd spend my time thinking up projects to take up with them.

One of the most fertile experiments ever made with that gang was an analysis of a poker game. And if you have ever thought about it, there are many similarities between a poker game and the way our economy functions. When I suggested a poker game, all these fellows said sure, they played poker. Fine, well let's have an imaginary game. But what are we



going to use for cards? We just assume there's set up for the benefit of the inmates at this jail. Oh, they said we could make it paper something, but they soon exhausted the possibilities of that and said we'll just have to say someone came in with a deck of cards and that's what we're going to play with, and I said, "All right." It's no fun to play poker without money. You got to have money, otherwise there's not a point of it.

What are you going to use for money? Well, you know, you can go into the whole history of money in that kind of a question if you want to, and I could only carry it as far as I could hold their interest. But we exploit all kinds of stuff. For instance, they'd say, "Well, let's play for desserts. And if a guy wins, he can sit beside the chap he won it from and have two desserts and the other guy have nothing." Well, that was all right, but suppose he won three or four desserts, what's he going to do? He can't eat them all. This is the kind of thing we went through. Well, some guy had a ring or a watch or a belt buckle or something. Why can't we just trade these off? Well, what are you going to use as a common denominator of all of this? So they explored that kind of stuff. Well, finally they decided that the only thing they could do was assume they all came in with ten dollars, with the ten dollars down in the safe in the jail. They'd get it when they went out. They would issue sort of paper money for the ten dollars. So if a guy won the paper



money and he won ten dollars from the other fellow, he would just collect ten dollars when he left.

Well, anyway, they got the game underway. This carried on for weeks. Everytime I would go in there on Monday night, these guys would be up there on the cellblocks and hanging onto the grating. "Come on, let's get that poker game underway!" It's the way they greeted me! I got the game under way and they all had the same amount of money. Well, pretty soon some of them lost his money. What's he going to do? Oh well, someone would be friendly who had made money and just give him some to get him back in the game because that was the sole interest in this jail. That is what we assume. So you get back into the game, but then he lost again. He went back to his friend. In the meantime the friend hadn't been making money, so he wasn't about to loan him anymore. Then they said they had to swab out their cells everyday, or the loser could swab out a cell for a price. Get a little money, get back in the game. Well, two or three get frozen out. What happens? One guy will say, "I'll swab out your cell for less than what you've been paying the other guy," so he gets the job and gets back in the game. Well, this is something else again.

Two or three of them had some experience in unions, you know. They said, "Well, we'll get together and we'll establish a rate." Okay and it happened there were a couple of colored fellows. They're Blacks now, but they were then colored. But the Blacks got frozen out and the whites in



this embryonic union didn't care about having them in. So they went around to the folks that wanted the cell work done for them and they offered to do the jobs for a little less than the so-called union guys wanted. Well, it made the union guys sore at the Blacks. But eventually they had to face up to the fact that they either must take the Blacks into membership in their union or else the Blacks were free to undercut their rates and change anything they wanted to. But you know that makes even guys in jail think twice about bringing a Black into their unions. That was years ago. That was '35. . . '33 and '34.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were setting up a small economy that had all the lessons of a large economy.

HUNTINGTON: You teach a course, a basic course in economics, around a poker game.

DR. CRAWFORD: I see what you mean.

HUNTINGTON: See, they had to have paper money and they found the guy who was a pretty good engraver, so he made the paper money for them in various identifiable amounts. He was in the game too. He'd make the paper money, and that's what they passed around first. However, the engraver seemed to lose his money pretty fast, but by gosh the next morning he was back in the game pitching again. The rest of the inmates thought it was a little odd, so they decided to get someone to spy on the engraver. And that night, sure enough there he was in his cell making more money for himself. What in the world were they going to do



with a counterfeiter in their midst? Oh, by G--, they'd beat him up and take his money and everything else, you know. Here were guys in jail discovering how they were going to deal with a criminal in their midst.

Well, eventually the game winds up and one guy controls the whole pot, the game comes to an end. I said, "What do you do then?"

"Well, beat the guy up and take his money away from him and start over again."

That's the only thing of interest in the jail, you see. "Well, that's a heck of a way to live! Can't you do something else?"

Well, after that we went through the whole experience of a cooperative. "What are you guys going to do when you get out of here?" (They're only in for less than a year, you know.)

"Well, we can't expect much," they said, "because the world is against any criminal. So there's not much you can do except pick up a job if you can 'till they catch up with us again."

That lead us into examining the co-op idea. Now if we all band together, hang together, we might be able to make a go of thing after we get out. Well, what could you do? What can you produce? Some guy said, the cleaning and dyeing business, he knew it. Another guy says, "Yeah, I know it too. That's not for us, 'cause that's already controlled by



a bunch of thieves. If we get tangled up in that business, our goose is cooked before we get started."

Anyway, they decided to make shoes. They found an old abandoned shoe factory and one or two of them had some experience. So they are going to set up a shoe factory. Okay, where do you get the hides to make shoes out of? Well, you extend an invitation to bid to two or three tanneries interested and they picked them up where they could get the best price. All right, but suppose the second tannery was just a little bit more, had good hides and you'd be interested in. How are you going to decide where to buy your hides? You send an investigative team and you find out the two tanneries about equal in setup facilities and whatnot. But the second company was organized and they pay the workers a little more than the first one. The first one remember is the one that gave you the lower price, so what are you going to do about that? We're going to have a hard enough time making a go of things the way it is. They said, "So we have to get our hides where we can get them at the lowest price. "

Well, what about this idea of sticking together? How far does that principle extend? Well, that sort of slowed them up a little bit. You see, you can pick up all kinds of situations and develop them like this.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were developing experience in adult education.

MR. HUNTINGTON: That's the point with a very unique approach. And something else you have no



academic crutches to fall back upon such as grades, degrees, etc. If they're interested, they'll be there. If they're not interested, they won't be there. They won't stick around long, either. So you got to maintain their interest. Well, you know the funniest part about it, I'd go back to the graduate school and discuss with my professor of education some of the imaginary situations developed at the jail. I said, "Now what would suggest?" He became fascinated with this technique because it was such a novel approach to him and so unorthodox.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now this was while you were still at Yale in the jail at New Haven?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Yes. Well, then I got the job here at TVA.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you get that and how did you get that?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Well, as I had a telegram from someone in personnel saying they had a job in adult education down here, would I be interested and Ted Schultz, I believe, suggested my name. I said I would, and made arrangements to meet a chap by the name of F. Woods Beckman from personnel in New York. Mr. Beckman sent a wire asking me to meet him in his hotel lobby at ten o'clock the following Tuesday, but he didn't say what hotel lobby. I had to back-track on the telegram to find out in what hotel lobby I was to see him! Well, I saw him and eventually I came down here and I took the job at Muscle Shoals in Alabama.



DR. CRAWFORD: Was that January, 1935?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Correct. I started in the same manner down there that I had followed in New Haven--trying to find out what people were interested in and what good I could do. I found out that we had a pretty high-powered group of TVA people down there. You see this was the research center for our fertilizer program but practically all other TVA divisions were represented down there too. Maybe the division headquarters might not be there, but some major supervisor was in charge. These people never got together. They hardly knew each other. Here was a high-powered bunch of Ph.D.s and what not and nothing to pull them together except their work, and that didn't cross over.

When the local manager of properties down there tried to pull them together to form an area council, they lifted an eyebrow and said, "How come he's doing this? We report to Knoxville; we don't report to someone in another division down here." So that proposed system of forming an area council down there of all the top TVA representatives sort of flopped. They just weren't about to participate in informal discussions of area problems when the head was from another division and had not responsibility for their programs.

But informally I was able to accomplish about the same thing by organizing a weekly forum. The CCC boys had built a small auditorium at Muscle Shoals which could accommodate about 150 people. Every Wednesday night we would have one of



these supervisors tell the others about what they were doing in their program.

The first time an information program was started like this. Then after it got through, then the question period. Well, soon we introduced all kinds of other questions in here. I remember, we even got a woman from Tuscumbia, Alabama, one of the old-line aristocracy, to come over there and talk about the history of the area. She was an artist on the side. I introduced any subject I could think of to make life more interesting to these people who felt so isolated down there at Muscle Shoals.

DR. CRAWFORD: Was this your assignment or did you develop these ideas yourself?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Well, no one knew my assignment. I had to work out my own program. Matter of fact, I hadn't been down there six weeks until my so-called supervisor invited me to leave. He said I wasn't fitting in. But I said, "I didn't have any other job in mind so I guess I'd hang around." He left TVA shortly after that.

DR. CRAWFORD: That was in the spring of '35, I suppose?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Yes, well it may have been in the fall before he left, but he got a better job.

You know it's odd that even a personnel division will fall back upon what a man has done, what jobs he has had as the sole criterion of what he can do. This supervisor was recruited from the National Cash Register Company and he had ideas of just what should be done. He wanted courses set up



on any subject so that the volume of activities would be more impressive on his monthly report to Knoxville. Well, you can't do that with people unless they're interested.

We had a chap on the staff then who was fresh out of a college in Iowa. He had taken a course in child psychology so he invited the women in one of the villages (wives of Ph.Ds and others) to take a course in child psychology which he would lead. He copied some paragraphs out of his textbooks and passed them out to the women for their discussions.

Well these women were much too smart for that approach. So very quickly this chap found excuses for not making the scheduled class. He would come around to me and say, "I can't go out there and meet with the women next Thursday morning, would you take my class?"

Sure, I'd do anything then. So I would take his reprints, but we'd pitch them aside. One was on child honesty, or something like that, so I just described a situation and let the women discuss it. Johnny came late for dinner which was supposed to be at six o'clock. Rather than tell his father and mother he was out playing baseball and the game didn't end until 6:30, he told them a whopper. They discussed that for awhile with widely varying concepts of discipline. I asked them why do you think Johnny told the whopper rather than just say he was out playing ball and the game wasn't over in time for dinner, sorry. That got them into analyzing how they handled Johnny. They wanted discipline



around the home, you know, and they wanted Johnny to be there when dinner was supposed to be served. They began to analyze the situation, however, and they soon realized that they as well as Johnny were involved when Johnny tells a whopper.

We had several other sessions like that on related subjects.

DR. CRAWFORD: Now where was this class held, Mr. Huntington?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Village One at Muscle Shoals, Alabama.

DR. CRAWFORD: Yes, and were you teaching TVA personnel?

MR. HUNTINGTON: You could hardly call it teaching, but I was a general education specialist on the personnel staff at the time. I got involved in all kinds of activities. I organized classes for foremen at Wheeler Dam at one time. I used the same approach with them as I had with other groups. Those foremen were not about to go to a class on their own time (everything was done on their own time at that time) unless they were interested.

So I'd get 20 or 30 of them together and come prepared to set the stage, so that they would become interested in what I was trying to accomplish. All sessions were centered on some work situation. For instance, what you do with a lemon in your crew? They all had about 20 men in their crews. They admitted that there was usually some guy who laid out whenever possible and was needed. Well of course, a loudspoken foreman immediately said, "Throw him off the job. He's cutting down production. After all we're responsible for production on the job". The rest of the foremen



concurred. So what happens to your lemons? He goes over to Personnel, and since they are all softhearted fellows over there (this comes out in discussion, of course). They say, "Well, maybe it's just a clash of personalities between the man and the foreman. We'll give him another chance with another foreman." So he's assigned to another crew.

In the back of the room there was an old man who ran a rock quarry. He had about 50 men working in that quarry. He said, "You know, I think I've got all the lemons on this job in my crew. They've been assigned from personnel." Well, the others asked, "What about your production?"

"They tell me it's pretty good", he said.

So that opened up quite a thought provoking situation. How do you handle men so that they get interested in their jobs and turn out production, whether they're "no d---- good" to begin with or whether they're all high-powered workers? Then they start comparing notes, and once you get them started on this course they want to talk about their own experiences. Well I tried this out on Johnny this week and he was doing so and so. Rather than bawl him out and threaten him or run him off the job, why they'd try out different things. They'd come in and narrate their experiences like this. You know that kind of an approach can be fascinating. The guy here, he's a rough and ready foreman on construction jobs all their lives, getting interested in people and what makes people respond the way they do and how can you change it.



Well, that's the kind of thing I did for a year and a half. Then Floyd Reeves, your friend, say John Studebaker in the U.S. Office of Education is setting up some adult seminars over the county. He was very much intrigued with the idea of having adults take more interest in civic problems.

Up in Des Moines he built up quite a reputation for this adult civic education, so out here in Little Rock they're opening up a project, and they want three leaders. It was financed through WPA and you had for three leaders, you had thirty WPA people that you had to use in the program. Do you want to try it out? I said, "Sure". So resigned from TVA.

DR. CRAWFORD: When was this Mr. Huntington?

MR. HUNTINGTON: A year and a half after I went down there. When would that be? Summer of .

. .

DR. CRAWFORD: Nineteen thirty-six.

MR. HUNTINGTON: I went out to Little Rock, supposedly for a five month tour of duty under this project, but I stayed eight months because the other two guys wanted the program to be put on as permanent a basis as possible. So I stayed three months longer to see what could be done about getting a lay leadership to do all of this work.

We'd go out and work all day and go out at night and lead a forum, and get a high school with 300 people in there and give them a little talk or something (set the stage) and



get them to discuss things. We'd work up questionnaires and all kinds of stuff and we'd try to employ these WPA folks any way we could to promote this program. Well, it was all right, but it was entirely too much work for laymen to handle this kind of a program on a continuing basis.

Even though I stayed for three months, I don't think that it lasted very long. Because there was no one to pick it up and keep it going.

Well, then I came back to TVA. When I came back, they had two or three jobs that I could have if I wanted them. But then I came up with labor relations in Knoxville. When would that be? Eight months after I went over to Little Rock, anyway.

DR. CRAWFORD: That would have been about the spring of '37, I believe.

MR. HUNTINGTON: Yes, I came over in labor relations and I remained there until I left TVA.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, when you were at Little Rock you were working for WPA?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Well, it was a special program for the U.S. Office of Education on adult civic education. I forgot the title to the thing there. They had ten centers over the country, metropolitan centers. This was for Pulaski County, each with three leaders, paid for by the Office of Education, but they to get their money, had to get this thing approved, through the WPA. That's why we had the 30 additional people to keep busy in the program.



Well then I came back in labor relations and got involved in anything and everything that came along. One of my first assignments was going back to Muscle Shoals, because by the time I left, I had gotten acquainted with everyone down there. In TVA I've always had the novel job. I could do whatever I d--- pleased. Sometimes my supervisors knew about it, sometimes they didn't. But I had a free hand to do what I thought should be done. I went down there and they had some difficulties in chemical engineering. Arthur Miller, who was the head of the division at the time (has since died) was having labor problems because his superintendent of instruction was running the job with an iron hand and the labor unions, which were just coming up again out of the depression, resented him. They told Miller either get rid of that guy or we'll strike the job. Well, Miller had difficulty with this construction superintendent too. But he said, "Well, he'll check into it." And he looked around and found that other supervisors had difficulty with this guy, so he eventually let him go. But he called the labor guys in and said, "Now look! You're raising questions about the competency of my men. And I have all kinds of questions about the competency of your men. I therefore propose to make an analysis of the work force on this job and I don't propose to keep guys that are no good on the job."

Now how can we do this? Well, that means an evaluation of manpower and personnel has always had some high falutin ideas on how you do this--management too. But they hadn't



been able to do much about it, because labor is opposed to allowing something to go into a man's record that stays with him. "He fell down on this job and he was no good at that or something like that," you know. They don't want this kind of remarks in the record, because some later employer will raise questions about that. So a guy called me down there and said, "What can we do about it?"

I said, "I don't know, but let's experiment a little bit."

The first crew that I experimented with were the bricklayers. Down there we got some pretty fancy brick because you have to line all these furnaces with fire brick. It's a high class bricklaying job, so these just weren't jack-legged bricklayers, they were good men. There were about 24 of them in this crew. They didn't work the same day. Two shifts, I think and a foreman. I met with them over in their union hall and I said, "Now look, here's the problem; Miller's got a point. If you're going to say his superintendent is no good", and he said, "I want to know about the qualifications of all the bricklayers on this job-- who's the best, who's the bottom. Especially the one on the bottom, so that if there's a layoff, I'll let him go first."

Well, they saw that point all right, but who's going to do this? who's going to evaluate us? By G--, it wasn't old John so and so, the foreman, because that would give him free hand to blackball some of us and we're not about to have that happen. Well, I said, "So what? Got a better idea?"



Well, they talked about it and I said, "Well, why don't you evaluate each other?"

So we cooked up a list of all the things they did, broken-down job descriptions. One night they filled this thing out. Well, you can imagine, it varied all up and down the lot. Some guy would be at the top of one fellow's list and bottom of another fellow's list! So then they came back, I analyzed it, showed them the results of it, and I said, "This isn't satisfactory, is it? You can't even strike a happy balance."

They said, "It was a lot of work doing this and John's paid for something, by gosh, let him do it. But we want a chance to look it over before it goes in the records. We don't want any of his snide remarks put in there or something like that." John was a rough one too. So eventually after they explored the various possibilities of evaluating a crew of men, they left it up to the foreman to do this. They only wanted to be evaluated on the work they did, not on their potentials for doing something else. To h--- with that-- nothing like that. So broken-down, old John could only evaluate them on the work assignments he had given them. And then they said that they wanted the right to see it before it goes in the file. All this was done.

Well, at that time the Trades and Labor Council turned thumbs down on all work evaluation programs in TVA, right down there in Muscle Shoals, the old headquarters!



More than one of the crafts were doing this kind of a thing in response to Miller's statement that by gosh, if this works one way, it works the other. And if you have some deadheads in the labor force, we want to get rid of them first. I got rid of my superintendent, well let's carry it on. And one thing led to another and I spent half--more than half my time--going back and forth to Knoxville and down there. I knew them all and they trusted me, you know. I wouldn't double-cross them.

As a matter of fact, I'd go over to trades and labor meetings, union meetings, over at Florence, Alabama to talk about these programs. They welcome me at that time. Then later when I was down there, set up a labor school. We had a course in labor history and various things like that to let them take an interest. Because old Floyd Reeves was for this kind of a program, he sent in (he came down here) one of these guys. I know, it was down at Wheeler Dam. I met with a bunch of cafeteria workers when we were running the cafeteria there. They had their headaches and they were griping and I said, "Why don't you form a union so that you can have an official spokesman go to management and tell them your problems? You're just griping around getting no place." There was some guy in the audience from management and he went to the project manager and told him. "What the h---! What is this guy doing here from personnel urging his cafeteria workers to form a union?"



So the manager got on the train the next day and went up to Knoxville and saw Floyd Reeves. There's a guy down there that's trying to organize the workers!

Well, Floyd says, "That's what our policy calls for. We're friendly to that idea in the first place."

But he got on the train, came back, came one afternoon when we're sitting around like this. Mrs. Ankin was there and we had a couple of Alexanders. He hadn't had them before, and the first one he drank right down. It is all cream, you know, and then by the time he got into the second one he said, "Say what is this?" And we told him. He talked about the program and said anytime that you want to ask questions and get people stirred up--get their interests stirred up--you're free to do so. That's part of this democratic process. If anyone objects, I'll take care of it. That was the end of all that kind of criticism that I had. But one other guy--a supervisor--not in personnel wrote the FBI about me, because I was raising Cain down there. These questions and what not!

But later on then I came back and was headquartered in Knoxville, and then I got involved in grievance cases and a lot of other things. But I got started in the cooperative program. That was established, well a way back yonder, first in the trades and labor. As a matter of fact, we got this thing going when I was down there in 19. . . When did I come back from Little Rock? It was shortly after that. . . "36. It was an outcome of some of these problems that Miller was



having with his labor force at the time. We said why don't we get together here? The job stewards meet with Miller and talk over these things. So we did. We'd get all job stewards in Miller's office and they'd raise h--- about things.

Okay, straighten it out. And one of the things, oddly enough when you get an organization with a bunch of scientists and engineers and all of that, along with crafts people, and they have to work side by side, there is a lot of resentment goes on. And the craftsmen said, "They had to train some of these engineers how to operate the plant and all of that. " And they didn't like it, especially when the engineers were making more money than they were and what not. But they had to train them.

Well, these are the kinds of problems you could talk over and handle. Eventually, Miller got a craftsman, a plumber, sitting in with the engineers as a mediator. He could say yes or no, or that won't work very well, because you haven't followed this, and so forth. They anticipated a lot of the problems that came up later. When you see the problems which would prompt the craftsmen to say, "Those bone head engineers don't know a thing about this job." Because they could bring out these points before they started building. It made them sore as h--- when they would build a new oven, get all this fancy brickwork in there, and then some engineer would come in and say, "I'm sorry boys, but we didn't put a peephole in here. We've got to tear this out to



put a peephole in there." Now a bricklayer doesn't like to tear up his good work to put a peephole in it, but that's what he had to do. Now these are the kind of practical situations that came up and they thrashed them out ahead of time. And when the bricklayer is satisfied this is it, why then they went ahead and built it without all these frustrations. They would say, why management is jumping us because our work is too costly and all of that, but look what happens. And they got into a cost analysis, you see. They found out that the engineers were more responsible than the crafts were for the high costs of some of this work.

Now these are the kind of things that you got to feel your way into and work out a plan to attack them. And that's the last d--- thing we seem to get around to in the administrative setup in any organization. You know, all these people are trained in the old school that if you get your people properly classified and one on top of the other. . . the guy up here knows and he tells the others down here and they all do it. It works like that. It doesn't work that way at all.

DR. CRAWFORD: It certainly did not in TVA.

MR. HUNTINGTON: No. But that's the way they're trained.

Now in this cooperative program we'd have representatives of all the unions on the job. I was primarily in the white collar field meeting with the top management people, about equal numbers, about once a month, and we would talk over stuff. But you know, I'd say in 95%



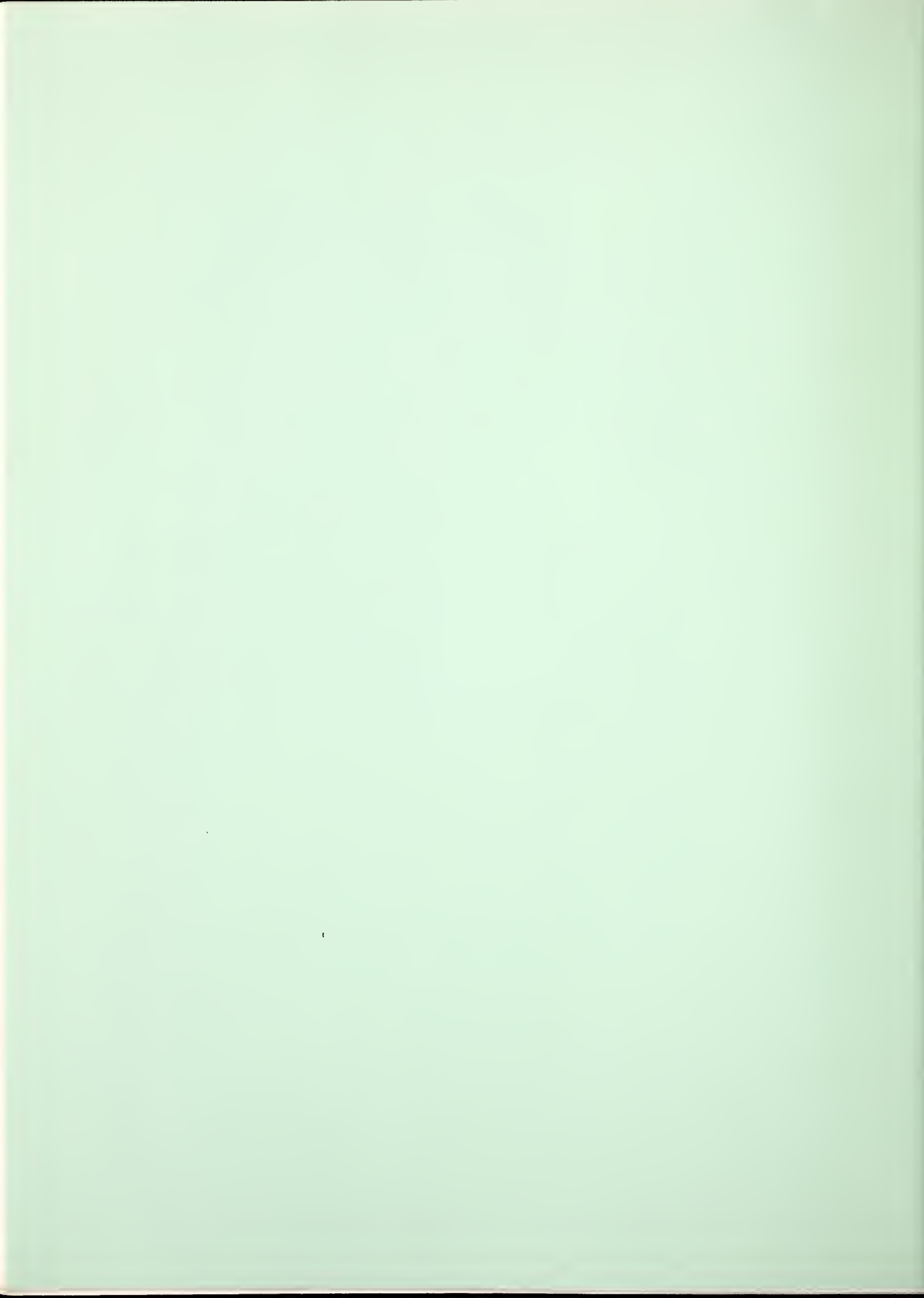
of the cases you started with the management which is sort of prejudiced against this idea, even though this is a board policy expressed in 1939 in employee relationship policy. If the board would welcome this kind of a development. . . It hurts the dignity of a lot of supervisors to think that people under them can question them or their decisions or ask to be involved in something. So it would take them a long time to be developed to the extent where they could take this with equanimity.

DR. CRAWFORD: When did you reach the point where they could accept it?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Well, it was never accepted by individuals. I wouldn't say there was a general acceptance. No, it was not acceptance. They accepted the policy. The policy is black and white. So this is what the board believes, so they know it is policy, makes them go along with it. But to do it with some intelligence and perception involved was something else again. Those people you began counting on one hand and [trying to multiply] and so forth.

DR. CRAWFORD: You were very fortunate to have them.





THIS IS THE ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE OF MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY. THE PROJECT IS AN ORAL HISTORY OF TENNESSEE VALLEY AUTHORITY. THE DATE IS DECEMBER 20, 1972. THE PLACE IS SANIBEL ISLAND, FLORIDA. THE INTERVIEW IS WITH MR. LLOYD HUNTINGTON. THE INTERVIEW IS BY DR. CHARLES W. CRAWFORD, DIRECTOR OF THE MEMPHIS STATE UNIVERSITY ORAL HISTORY RESEARCH OFFICE. TRANSCRIBED BY BARBARA WASSER. INTERVIEW # 2.

DR. CRAWFORD: We'll go into personnel relations, labor relations and why the personnel division functioned as it did, if we could get to that Mr. Huntington.

MR. HUNTINGTON: Well, in the early days we had both inspiration and support from men like Clapp and Jandry [who] was another successor to Clapp. But their's are the concepts of personnel we started with which are excellent and we hadn't changed them since we started. But they are now words, rather than meaningful philosophy that these people [today] are trying to administer. But Reeves started it and Clapp took over, and Jandry and they tried to encourage anything that would put meaning into the basic philosophy of TVA, which was first spelled out in the employer relationship policy. Have you seen that policy? You should get it, if you haven't.



DR. CRAWFORD: Yes sir, I think I have a copy.

MR. HUNTINGTON: The back last paragraph talks about the cooperative program. Well, now that gave recognition to unions, recognition to union representatives, and all that kind of thing, which is an historic document (at that time). Well, we had a number of people all down through the ranks that believed in it, too, and they tried to do what they could, but the bulk, I'll have to say, of the work of the personnel division was the normal stuff: classifications, employment and payrolls, wage negotiations, and things like that.

Now when we started negotiating for trades and labor wage rates and salary policy wage rates, that gave a lot of meaning to this union/management concept. That was the basic idea. They could negotiate pay rates and working conditions and what not. That's a very meaningful thing to the unions, of course, and that got you started. But after you complete that, that only takes a month a year, what do you do? Now that's where this other program came in. You try to get together periodically with your representatives of labor and management and talk about the ongoing things. That's the part that I don't think we have gotten past first base with in all these years, because that is predicated upon this different management philosophy than the one that is taught in the textbooks.



DR. CRAWFORD: But didn't that work well in the early years?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Yes, pretty much, but there are some questions about. . . Lots of supervisors, you see, even superintendents you'd have to call them to Personnel for an interview to talk about this philosophy. We propagandized the philosophy in TVA at that time by saying, "Now these people who are going to be running these projects--construction projects--this is our belief spelled out here." And they had to sign a statement that they supported that philosophy. But we went out of our way to point it out to them. We don't do that anymore. We just assume they know, and they don't.

And we don't do a very good job of training the supervisors in this field at all. Van Mol expressed it once. I said, "Now, Van, if you want this organization to perk up and show an interest in this field of management of people, why in yourstaff conferences don't you ask a question now and then? What are you doing in this field? And how do you know you've got a good working force? What criteria do you fall back upon to measure them? "Well", he says, "that's all pretty vague." So you spend your time talking about programs. Well, I've talked to division heads many times, and the ones that are most conversant with what we're talking about now say they have never been asked the question about their philosophy of management by top management people.



DR. CRAWFORD: That's different now.

MR. HUNTINGTON: Now that's what we're talking about. How do you run your organization? How do you evaluate it? How do you know what you've got in an organization? They depend upon the usual method of program emphasis, outlining the objectives, and so forth. Some of them do that from the top down--amalgamation of all the thinking of the whole group. That's another area where we could get all kinds of meaning if you could involve all the people who actually do the work into setting the goals for your organization. That's a perpetual thing, it keeps going. But that takes some extra work, and after all, what do you hire a manager for if not to spell these things out.

That's where your differing philosophies sort of clash head on. And the one school of management is the one represented by Doug McGregor and Renses Lippert and that bunch of guys who say, "Throw your textbooks away and use this other approach."

I went into a superintendent's office one day, and he had a room like this desk down here and he had shelves lined with A.S.C.E. journals, all the other journals, you know, construction journals around here. I said, "This is mighty fine. Do you get the men to use them?"

"Oh", he said, "yes, I expect it because this is the way we keep up with construction."

"But", I said, "I don't find anything, any magazine among your stacks of magazines around here on sort of the



human relations on this job. How do you know what you got cooking for you in that field? Some of these folks are saying you can effect a ten percent savings in cost, if you understand how humans react and what makes them react in differing ways. But I don't see anything about that. You don't have the Harvard Business Review around here. Sometimes they run very good articles." I suggested two or three other things.

He says, "You know, this is our bread and butter." He points to the magazines. I expect my supervisors to keep up on construction methods, and we do not have time for that other." Now that is the significance of the differing philosophies, you see. This is tangible, they understand it, they get new methods of construction, rigging all that kind of thing. If they're not up on it, they're replaced by someone who is. So they got to keep up on it. But this is an intelligent project manager. He is still with TVA. One of the best we got.

Now I could send him articles. I'd just mark the articles, send them down to him and suggest he pass them around among his men, or have discussions of them. They never have discussions. They may pass something around. You mark an article and get the library to check certain things to different people. They may read them themselves. Of course, I always went around and said, "What did you do about that article that I sent you the other day?" and so forth.



Land, I wasn't supposed to do all of this. After all, I was just a lowly guy in a Personnel Division.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, most of the things you did, you didn't have to do, did you?

MR. HUNTINGTON: I wasn't supposed to do some of them, because at one time we got the notion that, well, we're getting our lines crossed. Only the heads of divisions should talk to the heads of other divisions, and stuff like that. Well, you know you can't operate the program that I was pushing in TVA on that basis. So I just didn't talk about it much except to people that were friendly with the notion, but whenever I went out on a job I'd get my organization chart book out, go down the whole list from janitors up to the superintendent, so that I knew I could recall names. They all knew me, because I got floated around enough, but I had to recall some of the key names so that I could do this.

But the thing that makes the organization click is not what is in the textbooks, usually, and it's illustrated by just the human responses. Here we at one of our co-op conferences in a steam plant, the janitors said we'd like to do something about slick walls and floors in our bathrooms. Too many fellows are slipping on them. What could they do? Well, they talked about it and they said, "Well, they thought it was the soap they were using. Well, let's try out a different soap." They are encouraged to try out different things. Same way with all the glass doors the people put



their hands on and they think that someone has to come around and wipe them off right after that. What kind of glasswax and what not?

And what was it that we got one of the janitors involved in. . . oh, in the lobby. In the public lobbies, they liked to have them sparkle, and some superintendents insist on it. But the janitors say that these women come in here in their high heeled shoes--that's when they wore high heeled shoes--and they slipped. [They were] afraid that someone is going to break an ankle or a leg. Now, how can we keep this place spic and span without that hazard? Eventually they got around that, but I don't know what they did. They worked with office service supplies and so forth and tried out different things until they got something that worked best. Now to hear those janitors tell their story, you know, they just blossom out, because they're doing something that is meaningful to them in their daily work. And you always had to have the stuff that was pertinent to the guy who was doing the work. You can't have a janitor talk about how the bricklayer should lay brick. You want to get the janitor to talk about the problems he runs into.

DR. CRAWFORD: But that was unusual, wasn't it, involving people even at the lowest levels?

MR. HUNTINGTON: No, that's the purpose of our whole cooperative program.



DR. CRAWFORD: But that was unusual for that to be done, wasn't it?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Oh yes. In the federal service alone you have to pay money for employee suggestions. Well, we've had in this cooperative program thousands of suggestions, all kinds of them by employees. They don't get a dime for them. As a matter of fact, both the Trades and Labor Council and the Salary Policy Panel have turned thumbs down on the idea of cash awards, because they say that's not what we're after. We want this teamwork approach where you get in and you ought to do something about this, and then they start putting their heads together. And it's a group approach to resolving the problem. Now you get an individual always around, thinking of the hundred dollar cash award he might get, if he comes up with a bright idea, he won't participate in that group plan, and the employees are wise enough to understand that. You see again a different philosophy.

Now in the federal service I had to go to Washington once a week to meet with some of these people who were promoting the cash awards system. High-powered guys, you know, and the navy has announcements out they spent a million bucks and so forth for awards. Employees are written up in the papers. We have the same thing. We don't pay anyone, and the employees feel better about it. They couldn't understand it. They said, "Well, if you get all these



suggestions without paying for it, if you paid for it, wouldn't you get that many more?"

I said, "You'd got that many less, really because it doesn't reflect the interest of the employees.

Well, you ask what has made TVA function the way it has functioned, and I'd say it's a conglomerative of the basic philosophy which we started with and we're extremely fortunate in having a Board of Directors who were sympathetic to what was then considered to have been a very radical approach. It isn't now so considered and isn't! And we had administrators in personnel, general manager's office, who were thoroughly conversant with it, believed in it, and who promoted it and supported it.

Clapp would give talks, you ask him now here, we want you to talk about this. He'd get up there and give a talk that would convince them all, just subtle approaches, nothing grand style, but they believed in him. We have not had that kind of infusion in the TVA organization of the basic philosophy of personnel administration since then, I don't think.

DR. CRAWFORD: Why was Gordon Clapp so effective?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Well, he's an intelligent man in the first place. In the second place, he had innate understanding of what we're talking about now. Somehow or other he just had it and he had much to do with the adoption of the employee relationship policy, which looked forward to these developments, you see. So he wanted to encourage these developments, which is in turn an



application of this basic philosophy. Now, I don't know how you define uniqueness or how you determine what makes uniqueness. In the Graduate School of Education I used to ask that question, and they had no answer. If you find that this is a significant trend or this is a novel approach or something, how do you encourage others to use novel approaches? No, they didn't have it, and they don't have it now, and I don't know just how you do.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, why did TVA have this creative nature and these people who could work, as Clapp could, Reeves and others, in the early period? Was that simply chance that TVA had very good personnel?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Yes, I think it was. We could have gotten started with these orthodox personnel people and they'd have done a typical job of hiring people to do jobs, and so forth. We wouldn't have had the imagination which has characterized TVA through all these years. And furthermore, we've got to figure out someday how we're going to have more of this, because it is the history, Parkinson's Law, the old institution sort of wears out, formalized until you forget what in the h--- you were there for. And that's happening. Our new people are now coming in and they don't know anything about the background of TVA. It's a job.

I think a major problem in TVA to get them to see that there's a long tradition which justifies looking at things a little differently than they normally are accustomed to in



handling the job. And most of them--employees and supervisors--come up through colleges where they teach administration in the orthodox manner: classification, organization charts, hiring the right people for the right jobs, proper supervision, all of that. By supervision means laying out a job to them and checking up to see if they did it and if they don't, bawl them out; if they did, commend them, and so forth.

But the other approach is, you hire a guy to do a job, a supervisor, and bring him in and talk about the job. "Well now, do you have any ideas how you can be effective on this job?" And together they lay out a program, or he lays it out.

The supervisor say, "That's fine, now go ahead." Then a few months later he calls back in and say, "How are you doing?"

"Well, I'm doing a thing on this or I've made a little progress on this, so he encourages that guy to set his objectives and push him along, rather than calling on him and giving him a rotten service record and saying, "You're not doing the job the way it should be done." because that alienates the employee right then and there. But boy oh boy, is that a major job.

I've gone back since I retired to find out what we're doing in supervisory training. We never have done a job in it. Over the years we've had various people who carry exalted titles in this field, but nothing has happened in



the organization, I don't think. Everyone looks for a textbook or a videotape or something that they can show before a group of supervisors. Then they talk about that a little bit. But G--, it's a far cry from effective supervision. I don't think you can get a canned course in supervision that amounts to a d--- these days. It's got to be done on the job by folks that are close enough to the job to help out and so forth.

Every time I would get a manager interested in this he'd say, "I have to spend too much time on this. I haven't got this amount of time. Where can I get some help?"

I said, "Why don't you go to personnel?"

He says, "These guys don't know what we're talking about." He would say, "If you want people, they'll get you people, but what are the problems over in the accounting office? You ask a personnel man, h---, he's never been in the accounting office. He just hired accountants for them, so he doesn't know. And I've gone to personnel and I say, "Why can't you spend some time doing this? Here's a project manager wants it done, wants some help in personnel on it. I haven't got time for that, that would take too much time."

He 's checked up by his supervisor on proper handling of employment applications and sifting of personnel, and they have no time for this.

DR. CRAWFORD: So Parkinson's Law has been in operation?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Parkinson's Law is very evident in its operation in TVA. Because you ought to



be able to measure an organization by its vitality. It's whether or not people are enthusiastic about it, how much they understand about it, and all of that. None of that is being done there.

DR. CRAWFORD: Well, it would have been very unusual if any organization could maintain vitality, wouldn't it?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Very. And it would have to I think have the support of top management. Now Lynn Seber, good guy, good lawyer, native boy, right there from Clinton, Tennessee, but I don't think he has any more understanding of this kind of stuff than talking about the man in the moon. And Red Wagner didn't much either. Red was sort of sympathetic, but he was too much involved in programs and justifying programs, defending them, and so forth.

Incidentally, when anyone asked about these other things, they would refer to what's going on in the cooperative program or something else, all these training programs we have and what not, our interest in this field. But it wasn't the same thing as what we got in the early days with Reeves and Clapp and the rest of them, which was incredible insight and appreciation for this kind of stuff. Now try to get it just to a division head or a top manager! Why don't you call the supervisors together and talk this thing over? And that became a training program for supervisors. I'd try to tell them, my own staff, I'd suggest something and they'd jump on me, because that's a function of



so and so over here in training. So I'd show up and tell them, "I can't operate a program properly without dealing with both sides of the fence here and I intend to do it." So I just did, and didn't tell them about it. But that's the predicament you get into. There are people that are supposed to be advisors to management on training of supervisors.

They're never called in by management. I'd go into staff meeting and tell them, why I met with mine everytime I go out there to the plant. The superintendent would call a supervisor of a staff. We'd go around the room seeing what they're doing. "Do you have any comments I might make." You know, I had no business doing that. No authority at all. But they liked it because now and then I would help them out with a suggestion, or something like that.

For example Wessenauer went over to Gatlinburg, one of the valley-wide conferences. Well, Wessenauer always preached efficiency to the employees in all of the plants in all of the TVA. And I told him once that I thought the cooperative program could help out with that, if we could get our fingers onto something meaningful to the employees. Now what is meaningful in a modern steam plant to employees, so far as their efficiency is concerned? What can they do about it?

Well, I would go into the cost engineer's department and say, "Can't you shake out some statistics--meaningful statistics--on cost in this plant which we could take up with employees in our conference?" So that they could say, well



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Well, I would go into the cost engineer's department and say, "Can't you shake out some statistics--meaningful statistics--on cost in this plant which we could take up with employees in our conference?" So that they could say, well

things are done a little differently. You couldn't get one suggestion argued out of any of them. They hadn't set up their books that way. They could tell you how much it cost to tear a unit down and put it back on the land. That's about the only way you could reflect labor costs. But when it comes to the cost of the operation of a steam plant, fuel takes about 85 percent of the cost. And the other costs are distributed and you get a meager little one percent, let's say, for labor costs. That may not be the correct figure, but that illustrates the problem.

Yet we preach to the labor people that they should be ever mindful of the cost of producing power, when they couldn't affect one percent of the cost of that power. Now, that's the kind of a problem that is sort of irritating, because you can't put your hands on something in a steam plant which can be useful in getting employees to take this kind of vital interest in the cost of operating that plant. Now Wessenauer said, "Well, you may have something, but I just don't know how to get ahold of it. Because labor is important to us, but when you break it down, it doesn't figure statistically. It cannot be demonstrated very effectively." So",he said, "I just don't know how to do it."

Now in another place, we got the cost engineers on a job interested in this thing, on a construction job, and they spent every Monday morning 15, 20 minutes talking about it. When they came on the job they'd have employee-management



meeting where there were no administrative lines drawn. They'd just talk about problems they'd run into and what might be done about it. And the guy in charge of that was the last fellow I thought could ever make it work. He caught on. He saw the significance of it.

DR. CRAWFORD: Who was this?

MR. HUNTINGTON: He's a chap at one of the steamplants, no a construction plant which was outside of Nashville someplace.

DR. CRAWFORD: Johnsonville?

MR. HUNTINGTON: No, it was a construction job at one of our big steamplants. But oh, the way this started is interesting background. That job we had a good project manager, and we had some problems. I went into him one day and said, "Say, I hear these stories about a lack of efficiency on this job because on Monday morning all the crafts line up, two or three journeymen with a truck driver in front of the storeroom to get supplies for the day. They spend an hour hanging around there, waiting for clerks in the storeroom to issue the supplies. Well, the clerks are doing the best job they can, but [they] still waste the time of all these people. I said, "Why don't you have the supervisor of each craft think about this thing and see what can be done about it. I'll see that it's taken up in the storeroom." I went over to the storeroom and I said, "What do you guys have to say about this?" Here is management that complains about all this. Well, they came up with all kinds of suggestions:

visual display boards where a guy brings in a broken part you can match it against a display, so he won't have to spend his time in a catalog trying to figure a number before he can order the part.

Well, a number of things like that, but out of it all came also the suggestion: well now look, this takes 15 or 20 minutes time on a Monday morning to get squared away on the job. Now why can't all of the units on this job who are not involved in problems like this just gather together and talk about the week's work and what might be done and what might be done better and what happened last week. A little just informal discussion. You don't need to blow it up, just an informal discussion. It may last five minutes, it may not be held every time, but see what can be done.

And out of that the storeroom did some of this other work, they didn't meet on Monday mornings, they met some other time, because they thought the idea had merit. They got ideas out of their people. But this cost engineering office met every Monday morning, because they weren't involved with anyone else. My gosh, that guy afterwards, I ran into him, and I said, "Well, what's happening on this job in your outfit?"

He said, "These Monday morning discussion things were the best ideas ever happened in long years here. " Now these guys would come up with things. . . They would bring up their problems and all of that and talk it over and get squared away. These fifteen minutes are the best investment of time



that I make on this job. Now here's a . . .you know, an old orthodox supervisor of auditors, accountants and he gets thrilled by it.

Well, there's a million and one of these kind of experiences, but I don't know whether they illustrate why TVA is different or what makes it different or how it happened to be different, but there are not many people, not even in Personnel, who are promoting this kind of a program.

Matter of fact, I don't think it is one percent of Personnel even that's really pushing this kind of personnel philosophy and this is a personnel philosophy. We ought to be 90 percent pushing. Well, have we covered enough ground for today?

DR. CRAWFORD: I think I have seen generally how you did and why you did it, but I'd like to hear about some more people we might talk with about that.

MR. HUNTINGTON: Well, I'll give you the names of two others. Take Howard Hill's name down first, and you get it out of the Knoxville directory. He was in Personnel

DR. CRAWFORD: He's in Knoxville?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Well, I think he lives in some town right outside of Knoxville.

DR. CRAWFORD: He should be in the Knoxville phone directory?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Yes, or a TVA retiree directory. You can get that. And talk to Ethel Reagan.



She is in Knoxville. She was hired as Reeves' secretary and wrote his speeches in the early days.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is her name Reagan now?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Yes, Mrs. James J. Reagan. And she was my right hand man.

DR. CRAWFORD: Is she in Knoxville?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Yes.

DR. CRAWFORD: And she was Reeves' secretary?

MR. HUNTINGTON: Yes, originally. She came down. . . She was employed by TVA up in Washington, one of the original TVAers and conversant with the whole organization. Mrs. Vie Whitmire was the second.

DR. CRAWFORD: How do you spell that, sir?

MR. HUNTINGTON: V-i-e was her first name. Her husband died a couple of years ago. W-H-I-T-M-I-R-E. She's in the Knoxville directory. She retired And she was in the corporate program among the trades and labor employees. She came in the early days. Both of them are very knowledgeable gals. And if you want a modern slant on things, get John Massey's administrative secretary, Alice Ruth Burnett.

DR. CRAWFORD: I'm glad all these people are in Knoxville. It should be possible to see all of them easily because I get to Knoxville fairly often.





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